
Integrated Language Study

The goal of integrated language study is to extend each student's ability to use and to understand how the language cues and conventions work in effective communication. Instruction about language includes helping Middle Level students to use the cues and conventions of the language presented in a text to understand that text. It also includes helping students use and attend to the language cues and conventions appropriately when communicating ideas to others.

Students' facility with language develops through authentic and relevant language experiences. Language study does not comprise a separate unit or topic of study. Rather, **language study is integrated into the language processes and language use.**

Through language study, students are provided with opportunities to learn to use language in a variety of meaningful situations for a variety of purposes and audiences; to learn about language in ways that help students discover that language is a necessary tool for effectively communicating in their daily lives; and to learn through language by applying knowledge of language to viewing, listening, reading, representing, speaking, and writing experiences.

Language Study is often associated with **grammar** study. The English language arts curriculum does not use the term "grammar" because of the misunderstandings that often result from its use. Some people use the term grammar simply to refer to the parts of speech in a sentence structure and their associated definitions (e.g., "a noun is a person, place, or thing") or simple ideas and sayings about language (e.g., "conjunction junction, what's your function?"). Others refer to grammar as usage or language etiquette. Still others refer to grammar as the conventions such as spelling and punctuation.

If teachers are to help Middle Level students learn about language and how it works and can be used, teachers should be clear in their own minds what they mean by language study and communicate that as carefully and accurately as possible. If teachers are talking about the various demands of social contexts, for example, teachers are talking about "pragmatics" (Yule, 1996). If teachers are talking about sentence structure, for example, teachers should use the word "syntax" or talk about "sentence patterns" or "structures". For the purposes of this curriculum, the terms from linguistics will be used to describe the features of language. To this end, Middle Level teachers need to consider the following terms and the key understandings associated with these terms when they are thinking and talking about language aspects and features.

The Language Cues and Conventions

Every language has its major components. These components work together to form meaning and to achieve the required effect on the representer's, speaker's, or writer's intended audience. Learning about and exploring each of the different language cues and conventions can help students become more confident and competent language users.

Pragmatic Cues and Conventions

Effective representers, speakers, and writers have a purpose and consciously or unconsciously craft their messages for the viewers, listeners, and readers. Good viewers, listeners, and readers notice this intent and the assumptions behind it. Middle Level students need to:

- think about the intended purpose and audience for a text
- think about the appropriate point of view and level of language for each communication situation
- understand and use the appropriate register and level of language for each communication situation
- consider the cultural overtones and contextual meanings of communication (including the time, the place, and the historical and social realities)
- understand how the language that authors use to convey ideas can make the viewer, listener, or reader think and feel a certain way
- think about the underlying values of the message.

Textual Cues and Conventions

Effective representers, speakers, and writers organize and structure their texts in particular ways. Good viewers, listeners, and readers recognize how the text is organized and use this structure as a tool for comprehending. Middle Level students need to:

- understand the textual conventions of the text
- notice the organizational framework and patterns within texts (e.g., chronological, sequential, episodic, descriptive, compare and contrast, cause and effect)
- notice the cue words within texts that signal the texts' structures
- recognize the importance of clearly stating key ideas, supporting details, and sequencing of the ideas
- recognize the need for coherence and emphasis of key ideas in effective formats

- recognize the role of supporting structures including captions, charts, graphs, illustrations, headings, and other textual features.

Syntactic Cues and Conventions

Effective presenters, speakers, and authors use sentences of varying patterns, length, and complexity to communicate ideas. Good viewers, listeners, and readers interpret the meaning of sentence patterns from the order in which the words are organized around the verbs. Middle Level students need to:

- recognize and express the main and subordinate ideas in various sentence structures
- recognize and use sentence variety
- recognize and use word order and punctuation to convey a particular meaning or emphasis
- understand whether a sentence is a question, statement, or exclamation and its purpose.

Semantic and Lexical Cues and Conventions

Effective presenters, speakers, and authors use different words in different ways to convey the intended meaning of any message. Good viewers, listeners, and readers recognize the important words and their intended meanings. Middle Level students need to:

- recognize and use key words and phrases to communicate effectively
- understand the meaning of known words and their meaning in the context
- recognize unknown words and determine their meaning by context (i.e., using the surrounding words), by form (e.g., derivatives, prefixes, suffixes, root words, compounds, and contractions), or by consultation (e.g., glossary, dictionary, and other people)
- differentiate between, and use appropriately, literal and figurative words and phrases
- differentiate between, and use appropriately, words for their denotative and connotative meaning and value
- recognize that word choice and usage will vary with age, medium, dialect, occupation, social group, and intended audience, purpose, and situation
- recognize that some words are considered inappropriate
- use descriptive words to build pictures in the mind.

Graphophonic Cues and Conventions

Effective presenters, speakers, and authors use the distinctive speech sounds (including about eighteen

vowel sounds) and their pronunciation as well as variations in pause, pitch, and stress, and letter sequences of English to spell and communicate. Good viewers, listeners, and readers recognize the systems of sounds and their related spelling patterns. Middle Level students need to:

- understand that words are comprised of sounds and, in writing, these sounds are represented by letters and letter patterns
- recognize and use known patterns of letters and translate them into the sounds represented
- understand the importance of appropriate stress, pitch, and juncture in oral communication
- blend the sounds together to see if they form a sensible, recognizable word.

Other Cues and Conventions

Effective presenters, speakers, and authors enhance their communication with illustrations, gestures, models, organizers, sound effects, drama, and other techniques. Students use appropriate layouts and spacing as well as printing (e.g., for labels) and cursive writing (e.g., for reports). Students write legibly and fluently. Good viewers, listeners, and readers recognize the various ways that communicators use to enhance their communication. Middle Level students need to:

- recognize and explore different ways to enhance oral, written, and other texts
- incorporate visuals and other supports in texts to clarify and to enhance their communication
- represent and present their ideas in more than one medium
- learn about layout, typefaces, sound effects, visual formats, and non-verbal communication.

Teaching Middle Level students about the English language, its cues and conventions, “can bring to them the added confidence and clarity that go with any knowledge that strengthens skills and deepens understanding” (Haussamen, 2003, p. xiii).

Teaching Middle Level Students about Language

Middle Level ELA teachers need to model appropriate and “standard” English.

Although the usage and speech dialects may differ in their community, region, or social groups and situations, Middle Level students need to understand the range of “appropriateness” found in language and develop an ability to use different language registers according to the purpose, audience, situation, and subject matter. Middle Level teachers

need to draw students' attention to the language expectations for the classroom and use and model appropriate and standard English.

Middle Level ELA teachers need to set priorities for language study.

Teachers should review the **language concepts** identified in the outcomes and then set instructional priorities. Teachers can identify the important language concepts that need to be taught by observing students' language use, noting students' abilities, and keeping track of the types of usage errors students make.

It is important that teachers be selective in the number of language concepts that are taught at any one time. Teachers need to help students learn a few key concepts thoroughly and to show students how to apply their knowledge in their daily communication. In essence, Middle Level teachers need to consider how they can teach a "minimum" number of understandings about language for "maximum" benefit (Weaver, 1996).

Class and individual student language ledgers and profiles (see pages 18 and 19) can give Middle Level teachers a tool to consider what their students know and can do with language and what it is that students need to know and learn about the language and its conventions. Teachers can note and focus on the error features that need attention in each strand (e.g., pronoun reference, possessive apostrophe, unnecessary shifts in tense or person in writing). The language profile can help teachers identify priorities and plan for language study in individual units across the school year.

In addition to language profiles, teachers can:

- keep anecdotal notes about each student to indicate areas of growth and need with regard to language concepts and knowledge
- provide students with checklists or help students develop their own checklists for self-assessment, peer assessment, or teacher assessment and evaluation of their language understandings.

Students can keep portfolios of work over a period of time to demonstrate growth in the ability to use standard English.

Middle Level ELA teachers need to ensure that "terminology" does not get in the way of understanding.

Knowing language terminology provides students with a "language" to talk about their own and others' language. This terminology is meaningless, however, if students do not understand the concept behind a term. Middle Level students need to

understand how language works (e.g., "The comma guides the reader to pause when reading, thereby, clarifying meaning. "). Knowing how language works provides students with a tool for thinking about and for addressing their language issues. It is important to guide students to expand and extend their ability to use language effectively in their daily communication inside and outside of school, rather than to study it as a list of terms to be memorized.

Middle Level ELA teachers need to provide both implicit and explicit instruction to help students develop an understanding of how language works.

The key understandings/concepts must be taught and learned if Middle Level students are to become competent and confident language users. When appropriate, explicit instruction helps Middle Level students develop an understanding of how language works. Sometimes an inductive approach is useful (e.g., "Here are examples. What is the pattern, convention, or rule?"). Lots of discussion of language along with many opportunities to view, listen, read, represent, speak, and write help students learn how the conventions of standard English work in context.

Middle Level ELA teachers need to plan strategic language mini-lessons.

Teachers are encouraged to use "to-the-point" mini-lessons that are immediately meaningful because they connect the language concept or skill directly to the students' current viewing, listening, reading, representing, speaking, or writing experiences and reflect a **whole, to part, to whole** strategy. Mini-lessons can be provided at any time during a lesson, depending upon the students' needs. Following is one strategy for structuring a mini-lesson.

Introduce (Whole)

Introduce the language concept (skill or knowledge) using examples from material students are presently viewing, listening to, or reading, or from students' own representing, speaking, or writing.

Focus, Explain, and Practise (to Part)

Provide students with any additional, relevant information about the concept and use more samples, if necessary, to explain further or exemplify the concept.

Provide a brief interactive activity to help students establish relationships between the new concept or skill and current language use. Activities in which the students work in pairs or small groups are useful because, as students talk, they clarify their own and others' understanding. Activities should make use of

language experiences in which students are currently engaged in order for learning to be relevant (e.g., have students locate examples of compound sentences in the text being read or in own writing).

Review, Record, Apply, and Reflect (to Whole)

Review the major points made during the mini-lesson, and record the information with some examples. Record and post the information in a prominent place in the classroom, or have students take brief notes for future reference.

Have students immediately apply the new knowledge or skill in their own viewing, listening, reading, representing, speaking, or writing experiences. For example, following a mini-lesson about sentence combining, have students combine several sentences in a draft of their own writing. Students can also reflect on future strategies to consistently address this knowledge or skill. Mini-lessons may be taught to the whole class, to small groups, or to individual students, depending upon their assessed needs. Student needs will determine the type of language study instruction required at any given time.

Finally, Middle Level ELA teachers need to remember that teaching about language will not make errors go away.

Students will make errors in the process of learning. Remember that many errors in students' written communication occur as a result of using informal verbal language structures in formal written work. Teachers need to build a strong oral language component into the English language arts program that includes a range of activities including conversation, discussion, storytelling, role playing, choral reading, and more formal opportunities such as instructions, talks, announcements, and planned speeches. Middle Level students need help learning the difference between oral and written forms, and between informal and formal language situations.

Language Handbooks, Dictionaries, and Other Resources

Middle Level students need access to a variety of language resources including handbooks, dictionaries, and thesauri. These resources should reflect current Canadian usage. For specific titles, teachers should consult the lists of core and additional resources that support the ELA curriculum.

Teaching about the Pragmatic Cues and Conventions

A complete sense of the pragmatics of the language is often the last of the language systems to be understood and consolidated by students (Daniels, 1983). Schools afford Middle Level students opportunities to shift their language to meet the demands of different communication situations.

A critical aspect of language study is directing Middle Level students' attention to language usage and the purpose behind its use. Language usage refers to the choices including register, pronunciations, and patterns that effective communicators typically use. There are standards for different **situations, audiences, and purposes**. For example, different levels of language usage are expected and required for a casual conversation with a friend and for a formal presentation to an audience of parents and community members. Different levels of written language usage are appropriate for a friendly letter and a job application cover letter.

These language habits develop consciously and unconsciously within social and cultural milieus and relate to attitudes and language standards of groups. The ELA curriculum reflects the understanding that language varies according to situation. Cultural backgrounds, home language experiences, and school language experiences all determine usage. It may help to explain to students that we change our clothing according to the people we are with and the situation or event we are attending. Similarly, our oral and written language choices are also determined by the people we are addressing (audience), the purpose, and the circumstances or setting (situation).

A **dialect** is the variety of language associated with a particular regional or social group.

"Standard" English is a dialect of English and is often associated with middle class, educated, native speakers of a region. At any given time, the "standard" is usually determined from mainstream speakers and authors as well as "standard" English reference works.

A **register** is the ways in which language varies according to the purpose and audience. It ranges from very familiar to very formal "levels" of usage.

Students must be aware that language choices or levels range from very familiar or informal to very specialized or formal. Appropriateness rather than correctness dictates language choices.

The Registers and Levels of Usage

Register and Level	Characteristics	Situations/ Discourses
Frozen	Very formal	A Major Report or Study A Memorial Service
Formal	Fairly formal	A Business Letter A News Report A Formal Essay or Presentation
Consultative	Semi-informal	A Conversation With an Adult A Magazine Article
Casual	Language between friends	A Letter to a Peer A Diary
Intimate	Language between twins, lovers, or with a young child	A Very Casual and Intimate Talk

Most Middle Level students need help in using the range of registers required during life (Meeks & Austin, 2003). Their primary discourse is often limited to one or two of the registers. Instruction, modelling, and discussions about the pragmatic cues and conventions help students to make appropriate language choices and to use all the registers and levels of language.

Suggestions for Integrating Pragmatic Cues and Conventions Into Instruction

Instruction should be aimed at increasing the range of registers and levels of usage available to each student. Some guidelines follow:

- Teach the power of dialects and the dialects of power (Weaver, 1996).
- Develop students' awareness of appropriate language in many contexts.
- Give students opportunities to practise using language in many contexts.
- Talk about, model, and help students explore different registers and apply them in daily communication.
- Help students learn about the differences between the home discourse and the discourse of the school and broader society.
- Help students switch their registers, levels, and discourses to fit purposes and audiences.

- Draw examples (including correct usage) from students' work and the environment.
- Provide adequate communication prompts that include the pragmatic variables (e.g., RAFTS in the following sample mini-lesson).
- Encourage students to think about Wilkinson's (Wilkinson, Stratta, & Dudley, 1974) Framework: In this text, who is communicating what to whom, how and why, and on what occasion?

Teachers can help students build group and individual checklists such as the following:

A Sample Student Checklist for the Pragmatic Cues and Conventions

- Who is my audience? (To what person or group of people am I trying to communicate?)
- What is my purpose? (What is my reason for communicating? What do I want to achieve?)
- What registers and tone would be appropriate? (What level of language should I use and what "voice" should I assume?)

A Sample Language Mini-lesson Focusing on the Pragmatic Cueing System

Students will understand the following concept. In order to be effective communicators, we must consider several communication elements. The **key elements** are represented by an acronym – RAFTS (Adler & Vandeventer, 1989) – Role, Audience, Format, Topic, and Strong Verb.

Assessment and Evaluation

Do students understand and attend to the RAFTS variables when students represent, speak, or write?

Which variable(s) need to be highlighted?

Introduce

Considering a specific audience and purpose (strong verb) helps people communicate more effectively. Ask students:

- How would you explain to a friend that you had broken a gift that (s)he had given you for your birthday?
- How would you explain to a parent or guardian that you had broken the gift?
- How would you explain to a grandmother or grandfather that you had broken the gift?

When we are communicating, we can be ourselves, or we can take another role or voice.

- If you were a Grade 1 student, how would you explain to your teacher that you lost the soccer ball?

- If you were a Grade 7 student, how would you explain to your teacher that you lost the soccer ball?
- If you were your teacher, how would you explain to another teacher that you lost the soccer ball?

Explain and Practise

Effective representers, speakers, and writers consider several variables when communicating. They include:

R – the students’ role (who they are and what “voice” they will assume)

A – the students’ audience (the person or group of people to whom they will communicate)

F – the students’ form (the kind of presentation or writing that they will use)

T – the students’ topic (the subject of the communication)

S – a strong verb (the key word that gives students their purpose and a tone for their communication).

These variables can help make communication clear and focused.

Whenever we represent, speak, or write, we should consider the important variables or RAFTS that affect communication:

- What are your roles?
- Who is your audience?
- What form will you use?
- What is your topic?
- What is the strong verb that will direct you?

Consider the following prompt frames:

You are a **ROLE**. Explain, write, represent a **FORM** to an **AUDIENCE**, strong **VERB(ing)** about a **TOPIC**.

What are the RAFTS variables in this prompt?
You are a **VISITOR** on the planet Earth. Write a **POSTCARD** to your **FRIENDS** at home **DESCRIBING** what you saw.

Whenever you have a representing, speaking, or writing situation or an assignment, consider your role, audience, form, topic, and the strong verb that you will use. For example, what do the following prompts expect you to do?

- As a babysitter, persuade a three-year old child to take a nap, through a song.

- You are a jogger on the corner of a busy street. Create a sign for motorists convincing them to let you cross safely.

Review, Record, Apply, and Reflect

Now try it yourself. Choose an audience for a short paragraph (form) about the topic that we used last week (i.e., topic – music). Consider a role other than yourself (e.g., a singer, a parent, a DJ, or a musician). Consider a strong verb (e.g., deny, persuade, coax, invite, brag, apologize, promote, or announce), and then write a RAFTS prompt for your paragraph that would include these variables.

Now, using your RAFTS prompt, rewrite your paragraph in the role and for the audience that you have identified. Remember to rewrite keeping your strong verb (purpose) in mind.

Share your prompt with a peer. Read a draft of your new paragraph to your peer. Did you attend to all the variables in your prompt? What did your peer think that you did well? Which prompt could be attended to more carefully?

Review the variables for RAFTS (Roles, Audiences, Forms, Topics, and Strong Verbs). Create a prompt for an oral, written, or visual assignment that you would like to do in your ELA program this year.

Teaching about the Textual Cues and Conventions

Every text that students hear, read, or view is a type of text that has certain structures and features. Middle Level students need to have many and repeated opportunities to explore all kinds of texts – oral, print, and other – and to understand how these texts are organized (Olson, 2003).

Different people categorize the text and their structures in a variety of ways. Traditionally, texts have been categorized as prose, poetry, or plays. Each of these text types has, in turn, been sub-categorized. Prose texts, for example, have been divided traditionally into prose fiction and prose non-fiction or into descriptive (to describe a person, place, or thing), narrative (to tell a story or to relate an incident), expository (to explain or to give information), and persuasive (to argue a point of view or stand) or into genres (e.g., mystery, science fiction, fantasy). Because “genre” has become a catch-all term, experts urge us to use more specific and meaningful terms. Moffett (1983) classified prose as drama (recording what is happening), narrative (reporting what happened), exposition (generalizing what happened), and argumentation (inferring what will, may, or could be true). Whatever system or scheme for categorizing texts is used,

students at the Middle Level need to experience a range of oral, written, and other texts to help students communicate their ideas to a range of audiences for a range of purposes and to help students understand the organizational patterns used in a particular text.

The outcomes for Middle Level curriculum reflect the types of texts that students should explore at each grade level. As teachers plan their units, teachers should ensure that students have opportunities to explore various text types, their organizational patterns, and the words that cue these patterns.

Middle Level students need to realize that different texts require different structures and words that help signal that structure. **Descriptive texts**, for example, describe a topic by listing characteristics, features, and elements using words such as “to the left, at the front, beside, here, below, and characteristics are” to cue this structure. **Narrative texts** typically list events in chronological or numerical order. Words such as “first, second, next, then, eventually, meanwhile, if ... then, and finally” are often used as signals. **Informative, expository, and persuasive texts** often use examples, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, and problem and solution structures and signal their structure with words such as “for example, also, furthermore, in contrast, as a result, because, therefore, however, in contrast, and in conclusion.”

Suggestions for Integrating Textual Cues and Conventions Into Instruction

- Ensure that students have many exposures and discussions about text types.
- Highlight the textual features of oral, written, and other text types.
- Show students how they can use (Turbill, Bulter, & Cambourne, 1999) text formats as models.
- Use genre/story/text features, maps, and frames.
- Use structure maps to plan a text.
- Use key concept or idea maps.
- Teach mini-lessons on textual cue words.
- Provide representing, speaking, and writing frames.

A Sample of the Text Types Within and Across Domains (Adapted from McHugh, 1997)

Type of Text	Examples
Descriptive/Sensory	Journal or Diary Entries Descriptions of Objects, Places, or Persons Character Sketches Observation Essays Travel Brochures Poems (e.g., free verse, haiku, cinquain, acrostic)
Narrative/Imaginative	Real or Fictional Journal Entries Anecdotes Autobiographical Incidents Memoirs Eyewitness Accounts Dialogues Historical Fiction Short Stories Play Scripts TV/Movie Scripts Folk Tales Narrative Poems Feature Articles
Informative/Practical	Learning Logs “How to” Instructions Recipes Class Notes Meeting Minutes Posters Friendly Letters Business Letters Summaries Reports Interviews Biographies Newspaper Articles Applications Résumés
Expository/Analytical/Persuasive	Learning Log Reflections Analyses Letters to the Editor Editorials Speeches Reviews Interpretative Essays Issue Essays Persuasive Essays I-search Papers Research Papers

Teachers can help students build group and individual checklists such as the following:

A Sample Checklist for the Textual Cues and Conventions

- Is each text effectively and logically organized?
- Does each paragraph in written text begin effectively (e.g., start with humorous anecdote, start with personal experience, start with main points of presentation)?
- Does each text use a consistent point of view?
- Does each text use effective transitions?
- Does each text have an appropriate conclusion?

Teaching about the Syntactic Cues and Conventions

At the Middle Level, attention to **sentence structure or syntax** should help students develop an awareness of how words in sentences work together to construct meaning. Language study can provide the tools for students to conduct their own appraisals of clarity, force, and accuracy in representing, speaking, and writing. Students need to discuss word arrangements and sentence structures when revising their writing or when discussing oral presentations and works by other authors.

Integrated instruction about English sentences has two purposes: to enable students to manipulate language for effective communication and to extend the quality and flexibility of their language use. Teachers need to provide students with the following concepts and knowledge when they are applicable to the students' own language processes, on a need-to-know basis:

- Every language has unique word orders and patterns. (What is correct and conventional in one language may not be correct or typical in another language.) Such understanding increases students' appreciation of cultural linguistic differences.
- Words and word arrangements are classified according to their use and placement within sentences.
- Sentence parts include subject, verb, phrase, and clause.
- Types of sentence patterns include simple sentence, compound sentence, complex sentence, and compound-complex sentence.
- Expanding, transforming, combining, and de-combining sentence parts and sentence patterns create interest and enhance clarity. Sentence building, reducing, deconstructing, and combining activities are best employed using sentences that the students themselves produce.
- Other structural topics may include the following: pronoun subjects and objects, object of the verb, object of the preposition, verb tenses, subject-

verb agreement, possessive and plural nouns, double negative, and dangling qualifiers.

Teachers also need to address other concepts, knowledge, or terminology that students require in order to extend their ability to use spoken and written language effectively.

Middle Level students are capable of writing coordinated sentences, using compound verbs, reducing clauses to adjectives, subordinating clauses, and using appositions.

The average length of an eighth grade student's written sentences is usually 10.2 words in the pre-writing phase and 9.8 words in the rewriting phases (Loban, 1976; Hunt, 1977).

Suggestions for Integrating Syntactic Cues and Conventions Into Instruction

- Provide students with opportunities to use language in a variety of relevant and meaningful situations.
- Make students consciously, linguistically aware of the syntactical repertoire that they already possess.
- Help students understand how sentences are constructed, and empower students to make stylistic choices.
- Limit, but use the terms that are useful for immediate discussion and instruction.
- Expose students to well-written, well-spoken, well-presented texts.
- Provide mini-lessons within students' other language activities (e.g., revision in writing).
- Conduct instruction incidentally, briefly addressing an individual's or a small group of students' immediate needs.
- Draw students' attention to ways that authors use sentence structures for specific effects.
- Use texts that students are reading to provide examples of various sentence structures.
- Encourage students to "try on" or imitate sentence patterns that students hear or read.
- Use examples of student writing to demonstrate the various sentence concepts (e.g., instruct students individually or in groups as needed using an anonymous student draft to demonstrate the effectiveness of sentence combining).

Teachers can help students build group and individual checklists such as the following:

A Sample Checklist for the Syntactic Cues and Conventions

- Are all sentences clear?

- Have I used a variety of sentence types (statements, exclamations, questions, commands) and sentence structures (Subject-Verb, Subject-Verb-Object, Subject-Linking Verb-Completer) appropriately and effectively?
- Have I created sentences of varying length?
- Have I used co-ordination, subordination, and apposition to enhance my communication?
- Are there any sentence fragments or run-ons?
- Does each verb agree with its subject?
- Are the verb tenses consistent and correct?
- Are the appropriate verb tenses used?
- Does each sentence end with the correct punctuation mark?

A Sample Language Mini-lesson Focusing on the Syntactic Cueing System

Students will understand the following language concept. In order to make sense, words have to be arranged in a particular order in English sentences.

Assessment and Evaluation

What evidence will demonstrate that students have achieved the outcome?

Introduce and Explain

How important is word order in English sentences?

- Important order English in word is?
- English important is in order word?
- Word in order English is important?
- In important is word English order?

What do students already know about word order (patterns) in English sentences? Do students understand how English sentences are constructed?

The usual order of words in sentences is subject-verb-object (S-V-O).

e.g., I drove the car.
I like hiking.
The class played volleyball.

S (subject)	V (verb)	O (object)
Who or What	Does or Is	(to whom) What or (for whom) Who

There are two other patterns: SV and SLVC.

Practise, Review, Record, Apply, and Reflect

- Students could examine a text or recent composition. What is the verb in each sentence? Is it appropriate and powerful? With what word

did each sentence begin? With what punctuation mark did each sentence end? How many words are in each sentence? What could be changed in each sentence to give more power and variety to this composition?

- Students also could explore the ways effective communicators vary their sentences through sentence expansion and enrichment (Which one? How many? Where? When? How? Why?), sentence streamlining, and sentence combining.
- Students also could consider words used to name or label (e.g., for doing – verbs; for naming [and substitutes for names or labels] – nouns and pronouns; for describing – adjectives and adverbs; for connecting/joining – conjunctions; for organizing words into units – prepositions).
- Students could consider how they can give new life to ordinary sentences by inverting the order of the subject and verb; putting the key idea at the end of the sentence (periodic); balancing sentences that contain two or more equally important ideas; or using the imperative, interrogative, or exclamatory sentence patterns.
- Loose, declarative sentences are the main pattern, but when communicators want to emphasize a point or catch someone's attention, they vary this pattern. If communicators use these variations too often, they lose their impact.

Language mechanics (capitalization and punctuation skills and concepts) should be developed and integrated as needed and refined on a continuous basis. At the Middle Level, most students will have acquired basic knowledge about the mechanics of language; students may, however, need reminders about the application of students' prior knowledge.

Language Mechanics Skills and Knowledge

Students will find it useful to be able to name and know the purpose(s) of the following: period, exclamation mark, comma, semicolon, colon, quotation marks, dash, ellipses, italics, paragraph indentions, and capitalization.

Teachers should also address other mechanical skills, concepts, and terminology that students need to extend their ability to communicate clearly and effectively. These are best addressed on an individual basis or during small group mini-lessons as students are viewing, listening, reading, representing, speaking, and writing.

Suggestions for Integrating Mechanics Into Instruction

- Provide instruction on an individual basis as much as possible although at times small group instruction may be more feasible.

- Keep the learning relevant by using student work-in-progress as the basis for teaching mechanical knowledge and skills (e.g., during the revision stage of the writing process).
- Use samples of student writing to point out the use of specific mechanical skills and concepts.
- Teach punctuation and other mechanics for convention, clarity, and style (Noguchi, 1991).
- Make the purpose for the concept or skill clear to the students (e.g., the comma guides the reader to pause when reading, thereby clarifying meaning).

Checklists and anecdotal notes are most useful for monitoring student knowledge of and ability to use the concepts of punctuation and capitalization. These instruments may serve peer, teacher, or self-assessment purposes. Teachers can carry out diagnostic assessment for each student early in the school year in order to get a sense of the instruction that is necessary. Then, by continuing to monitor the student's use of the skills and knowledge on checklists or as anecdotal notes, teachers will be able to maintain records of each student's progress. Students can monitor their own abilities on a regular basis, becoming aware of areas of need and success.

Completion of checklists should occur over time and in the context of students' language experiences. It is important that teachers determine outcomes for gathering particular information from individual students as observations for each student will vary depending upon abilities and needs. The observations should help to determine the instruction needed by each student. A sample checklist/anecdotal record form, which can be used by teachers or students, appears on page 18.

Teaching about the Semantic and Lexical Cues and Conventions

A person's vocabulary or *lexicon* is a collection of words and their associated meanings that are used in communication. Middle Level students are building their individual viewing, listening, and reading vocabulary as well as learning to use words or lexical items in their representing, speaking, and writing.

Developing and expanding Middle Level students' vocabularies and spelling is a complex process that requires multiple exposures to words and their meanings in all the language strands and units (Leung, 1992). Students must be taught to use various word-learning strategies as students approach new words in the environment. Students also need to learn how to communicate clearly with a careful choice of words. Middle Level teachers must ensure that their students have many opportunities to see, hear, read, talk about, write,

manipulate, and become knowledgeable about words, the meanings, and the spellings.

A Sample Checklist for the Semantic and Lexical Cues and Conventions

- Are word choices vivid and do they accurately convey the intended meaning?
- Have frequently confused words been used correctly?
- Have I used qualifiers effectively and appropriately?
- Have I noted the denotative and connotative meaning of words and used them effectively?
- Are the pronoun references correct?
- Have double negatives been avoided?
- Have I spelled all words correctly?

Building and Extending Middle Level Students' Vocabulary Base

Vocabulary knowledge has a direct relationship to background knowledge and high-level comprehension and processing (Nagy & Scott, 2000). Large-scale vocabulary growth occurs through explicit instruction and incidental encounters with words (Nagy & Scott, 2000). According to Nagy, three methods of vocabulary instruction that effectively improve comprehension are: (1) integration of word study into meaningful viewing, listening, reading, representing, speaking, and writing tasks, (2) multiple exposures to the new words, and (3) meaningful use of the new words.

Suggestions for Integrating Vocabulary Building Into Instruction

New words are best learned and remembered when taught in context. Although viewers, listeners, and readers do not need to understand every word they see, hear, or read, they do need to understand the key words.

Help students to build vocabulary when they are viewing, listening, and reading.

Key words for vocabulary instruction are words that:

- are useful
- add meaning to a text
- are not easily inferred.

Vocabulary instruction should include a variety of complementary methods that help students explore the relationships among words and the relationship among word structure, meaning, and origin (Rutledge, 2000). For example,

Before viewing, listening, and reading, Middle Level teachers can:

- Activate students' prior knowledge of the vocabulary: What do they know about these

words? Useful strategies include using brainstorming, vocabulary alert, word sorts and categorizations, and word explorations (including common prefixes, root words, and suffixes).

- Make connections between words and the main topic. How are these words related to one another? Useful strategies include semantic maps and feature analysis (Nagy, 1988).

During viewing, listening, and reading, Middle Level teachers can:

- Model strategies to use when students encounter unknown words in context. What does this word mean in this context? Useful strategies include teaching students how to use context clues, word structure, and vocabulary self-collection (Haggard, 1986).

After viewing, listening, and reading, Middle Level teachers can:

- Clarify and define word meanings and concepts. How can we confirm and clarify what we think these words mean? Useful strategies include concept of definition, word maps, word sorts, and vocabulary reinforcement activities.
- Help students refine, extend, and apply new words. How can we make a word our own? Useful strategies include using the word when representing, speaking, and writing and discussing the word with others.

Word origins and etymology have a place in vocabulary development as does an understanding of the common English affixes.

Twenty Most Common English Affixes (White, Sowell, & Yanagihara, 1989)

Suffixes	Prefixes
-s, -es	un-
-ed	re-
-ing	in-, im-, ir-, il- (not)
-ly	dis-
-er, -or (one who)	en-, em-
-ion, -tion, -ation, -ition	non-
-ible, -able	in-, im- (in or into)
-al, -ial	over- (too much)
-y	mis-
-ness	sub-
-ity, -ty	pre-
-ment	inter-
-ic	fore-
-ous, -eous, -ious	de-, trans-
-en	super-
-er (comparative)	semi-
-iv, -ative, -itive	anti-
-ful	mid-
-less	under- (too little)
-est	

Word play using puns, palindromes, acrostics, riddles, and other such games and activities can also pique Middle Level students' interest in words.

Additional word knowledge strategies are found on pages 21-24.

Help students make appropriate word choices when representing, speaking, and writing.

Middle Level students need to learn how to choose words carefully for the audience, purpose, and situation. In addition to considering the geographical, social, and stylistic appropriateness of words, students need explicit and implicit instruction in choosing:

- precise and exact words rather than vague or many words (e.g., "The sun shone all week" rather than "It was very nice weather" or "He ambled" rather than "walked")
- vivid words that create clear images rather than flat or predictable words (e.g., "He had an iron will" rather than "He was stubborn").
- fresh words rather than trite ones including clichés (e.g., "dull thud").

Not showing off with "big" words when a simple word will do should also be encouraged (e.g., "accumulate" might be replaced by "gather" in some situations).

Middle Level students also need to choose words that have appropriate connotations (e.g., "stingy" versus "thrifty" versus "economical"). Students need to determine "shades" of meaning of the words used (e.g., fear, dread, terror, panic, phobia). Students might consider: Which words will express my meaning the best? Which words provide the best images?

Extending Middle Level Students' Spelling Abilities

The ultimate goal of learning how to spell is to develop and to extend one's ability and confidence to communicate effectively in writing. While students should be encouraged to experiment with language and take risks in draft writing when spelling unfamiliar words, students should also learn how to proofread and to spell correctly.

Conventional spellings of words have evolved over time and continue to evolve; there are, however, standard ways of spelling words so that readers are able to understand what writers mean.

Canadian Spelling

Middle Level students need to learn to use correct and conventional Canadian spelling including the spelling of words such as axe (not ax), catalogue (not catalog), centre (not center), colour (not color), cheque (not check), connection (not connexion), defence (not defense), socks (not sox). Set spell checker components of word processing programs to “Canadian” spelling and usage.

Standard spelling is most effectively developed within the context of students’ own writing. Instruction should focus on the words that individual students need in order to express themselves precisely and clearly. Individual spelling and vocabulary lists can help students keep track of those words that are of particular difficulty or relevance and of new words that appear in specific units of study.

Suggestions for Integrating Spelling Into Instruction

Integrated spelling instruction includes a variety of teaching and learning strategies and incorporates spelling instruction into students’ daily viewing, listening, reading, representing, speaking, and writing processes. Competent spellers have a base of word knowledge, an understanding of word patterns, and a repertoire of strategies (e.g., look-say-cover-write-check) from which to select when they attempt to spell an unknown word. As students grow in their knowledge and strategies, students are more willing to take risks to increase the number of words that can be spelled correctly and automatically.

Spelling Principles

Learning to spell is a developmental process and competence in spelling occurs over time.

Standard spelling is developmental. Growth in the ability to use standard spelling occurs gradually as students’ knowledge about word patterns and spelling rules increases, along with the ability to apply this knowledge when interpreting and constructing words.

Students progress at various rates through a series of stages from pre-phonetic to standard spelling (see Developmental Spelling Stages on page 25). Spelling instruction should help students build on their present stage of development and, with instruction, move to the next stage of development.

Spelling growth is enhanced when instruction is integrated into students’ daily language experiences. Spelling instruction cannot be treated as a separate and isolated subject. Middle Level

students transfer spelling knowledge and skills most readily when they are relevant and learned in the context of what the students are striving to achieve. For spelling instruction to be meaningful, it must relate to the students’ own writing. When Middle Level students understand that spelling is a tool for facilitating clearly written communication, they are more motivated to learn to spell in standard ways and appreciate the need to strive for standard spellings of words.

Spelling instruction should help students acquire a variety of strategies with which to analyze, remember, and figure out spellings.

Competent spellers use a variety of strategies to determine the standard spelling of unfamiliar words (e.g., knowing when to apply spelling rules or patterns, or knowing when and how to use a dictionary). When such strategies become part of a repertoire, students can apply these strategies to own writing.

Assessment and evaluation of spelling should be continuous and have instructional implications.

Assessment of students’ spelling knowledge and abilities requires continuous and careful observation by teachers and by the students themselves. Observation checklists, anecdotal notes, and conferences are ways of gathering and recording students’ spelling abilities and knowledge, and the instructional needs. Analysis of written products such as rough drafts, final drafts, and journal entries can provide further information about students’ spelling knowledge and strategies (see Spelling Error Analysis chart on page 26). Assessment and evaluation should take into consideration the developmental nature of learning to spell by focusing on individual growth over time.

Spelling Knowledge and Strategies

Learning to spell words is more than just “looking at” words. They need to be examined, sorted, manipulated, studied, and learned (Kosnik, 1998). To learn to spell words correctly, students need to explore the words in meaningful context (whole), closely examine and consider their features (to part), and then to re-contextualize and use the words in meaningful contexts (to whole). Middle Level students need many opportunities to notice how predictable the English language is when sound, meaning, and visual cues are considered together. Learning to spell words works best when students focus on words frequently used and with patterns, and when students see the words in context and then study them in short lists (7-10 words).

Middle Level students also require direct instruction and specific strategies to learn how to spell new words. Devoting approximately 10 minutes per day (for two or three days a week) to direct instruction

and providing students with strategies that help students “make words their own” is also required. Some **basic spelling strategies** (Kosnik, 1998) include:

- employing the pretest-study-test method in which students correct their own pretests
- teaching a general spelling strategy such as Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check or Copy; or Look, Say, Circle, Cover, Write, Check, Cover, Write
- having students study the complete word and then detecting patterns by looking for consistent word parts (e.g., syllable, words within words) and considering visual and semantic information along with phonetic knowledge
- helping students think about related words as words with similar meanings often have comparable spellings (e.g., real, reality, realistic, realization)
- having students identify misspellings in own and others’ written work
- having students keep individual spelling lists of personally relevant or problem words
- having students proofread for spelling during the revising stage (e.g., during drafting have students underline words that need to be checked when students are proofreading)
- teaching students how to consult and use dictionaries, computer spell checks, and other spelling resources.

Specific spelling strategies can be used to address different learning styles (Kosnik, 1998).

For **visual** learners, teach strategies such as:

- using visualization (e.g., look at the word, say it to self, picture word in mind, think about patterns in the word, cover the word, write it, uncover and check)
- highlighting letters that need attention
- making word walls and webs
- making bookmarks.

For **auditory** learners, teach strategies such as:

- pronouncing words correctly (saying it right)
- saying the word slowly
- snapping, clapping, or tapping syllables
- building word families by sound
- making a mnemonic device.

For **kinaesthetic/tactile** learners, teach strategies such as:

- learning words by “finger” writing
- making a pyramid (e.g., s, sh, sha, shar, share)
- making a chart, an acrostic, or a collage
- drawing words in different letter styles, size, or colours (e.g., HUGE)
- sketching homophones (e.g., foul/fowl).

Middle Level students are capable of recognizing and analyzing most common spelling errors. Discuss the nature or causes of misspellings with students including:

- omission of letters (often silent letters)
- inattention to word meaning (*no* for *know*)
- letter reversals (*becuase* for *because*)
- phonetic spelling or mispronunciation (*Febyuary* for *February*)
- confusing past tense marker *ed* with related homophones (e.g., *guest* with *guessed*)
- patterns related to doubling consonants (e.g., *fadding* for *fading*)
- irregular letter combinations (*prison* for *prism*)
- inattention to word root/base or source
- transfer of speech patterns from another language or dialect.

The Spelling Error Analysis chart is useful for keeping a running record of the type of spelling errors students make so that appropriate instruction can be provided.

Managing an Integrated Spelling Program

Spelling instruction should be determined through continuous assessment. It is important that teachers:

- engage students in meaningful language experiences
- create a classroom environment that values students’ willingness to take risks and develops interest in words and word patterns
- determine students’ spelling needs through continuous assessment and provide instruction as required and appropriate to students’ developmental levels
- select spelling words for study from a variety of sources
- emphasize spelling strategies that competent spellers use
- set up classroom routines and expectations for use of spelling strategies
- provide access to and instruction in the use of a variety of appropriate resource materials
- make it clear to students when spelling counts
- inform parents/caregivers about the integrated spelling program and about their child’s progress
- support weak spellers.

Engage students in meaningful language experiences.

When students are involved in a variety of reading activities (e.g., discussion circles, silent reading, pre-reading vocabulary exploration), students develop an understanding of word patterns and increase vocabulary. As well, through a variety of regular, purposeful writing experiences (e.g., letters, stories, poems, response journals), students develop an

awareness of the need for standard spelling to communicate their ideas and information accurately.

Engaging regularly in writing experiences promotes spelling growth, and teachers will find many opportunities within the writing program to provide both formal and informal spelling instruction. It is important to help students develop strategies for proofreading own and others' writing during the revision stage of the writing process. During this stage, when it is appropriate to focus on correcting spelling, teachers can help students to discover errors by encouraging students to:

- read their work out loud to themselves or a peer
- have a peer read their writing and underline misspellings
- during first proofreading, underline or highlight words that may be misspelled
- try misspelled words in different ways, or check with a peer or resource book after identifying misspelled words
- keep dictionaries and personalized spelling lists nearby during proofreading
- be aware of the types of errors made most often and proofread specifically for these
- read from the bottom to the top of the page to focus on individual words, rather than meaning, while proofreading
- use computer spell checks to shorten the process of proofreading, being aware of the limitations of such programs (e.g., typographical errors such as *though* instead of *thought* and homophones such as *their* and *there* will be missed by a spell checker).

Create a classroom environment that values students' willingness to take risks and develops interest in words and word patterns.

Encourage students to expand their vocabulary and their spelling knowledge by taking risks with unfamiliar words rather than simply sticking to the known. Involve students in a variety of word study activities (e.g., word derivatives, patterns, rhymes) that are clearly related to students' own reading and writing experiences, and spelling needs. Teaching students to use mnemonics and other strategies can be fun and beneficial. As well, games such as Scrabble, Spill and Spell, and Probe immerse students in word creation, vocabulary development, and problem solving.

Determine students' spelling needs through continuous assessment and provide instruction as required and appropriate to students' developmental levels.

Continuous assessment of students' written work provides information about their spelling knowledge and strategies, and informs the instruction needed.

Assessment of students' spelling growth can be done through peer checks of personal spelling lists.

Encourage students to review their lists and test each other on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Have individual students plot their growth by keeping a list of new words, rules, and strategies learned.

Instruction is most effectively provided in the context of students' writing through mini-lessons. These formal or informal instructional sessions should be based on student needs as determined through observation. Mini-lessons involve three to ten minutes of direct instruction with opportunities for students to interact and participate. The mini-lesson should make clear connections to students' own reading and writing experiences. Instruction may be pre-planned or spontaneous and may be conducted with students as individuals, as a small group, or as an entire class, depending upon student needs and abilities.

Language texts and commercial spelling programs may be useful tools for teachers as sources of information for mini-lessons and for students as sources of information about spelling rules, patterns, and strategies. Lessons in texts need not be followed sequentially, nor is it necessary to cover all lessons. Select the lessons that address students' spelling needs and use them as starting points for reviewing or learning knowledge and strategies.

Select spelling words for study from a variety of sources.

Students' individual or personalized spelling lists will contain both teacher-selected and student-selected words. All students will have some words in common in their lists and other words that are relevant only to themselves.

Teachers and students may select words for study from a variety of sources including:

- words students misspell in their own written work
- words about which students are curious
- words identified by the teacher as ones students need to know (e.g., developmentally appropriate)
- words relevant to specific topics, themes, units, or activities.

Teachers should attend to each student's individual spelling list when assessing written work. As well, teachers may structure regular class time for peer testing of the words on individual spelling lists. The results of these assessments will provide data about students' growth and about their instructional needs.

Emphasize spelling strategies that competent spellers use.

In an integrated program, it is important for students to learn and to apply spelling strategies within the context of students' own writing. Middle Level students should be able to:

- apply knowledge of spelling rules (e.g., *i* before *e* except after *c* gives the *e* sound)
- apply knowledge of common word patterns
- relate sounds in unfamiliar words to similar sounds in familiar words
- use memory devices (e.g., mnemonics)
- visualize (i.e., Does it look right?)
- apply knowledge of syllabication (e.g., carefully pronouncing words and syllables), pluralization (e.g., adding *s*, *es*), root words, prefixes, and suffixes
- identify misspellings in own and others' written work
- proofread during the editing stage (e.g., during drafting, have students underline words that need to be checked)
- consult dictionaries, computer spell checks, and other resources.

Set up classroom routines and expectations for use of spelling strategies.

It is helpful to establish classroom routines with regard to spelling practices and expectations because routines encourage independence. When students become familiar with how the class day is structured, most will be able to work independently and co-operatively within the parameters set. Teachers will need to model routines and expectations, and provide time for students to learn and to practise. Some considerations regarding routines and expectations include:

- use of classroom resource material
- use of individual, personal word lists (e.g., notebook, file cards)
- selection of words for study (e.g., words to be identified by the teacher and those to be identified by the student)
- proofreading procedures
- peer testing, using individual word lists
- scheduled and impromptu conferencing
- regular writing time.

Provide access to and instruction in the use of a variety of appropriate resource materials.

Students should have access to and know how to use dictionaries, language texts, and thesauri. By placing appropriate resources on a classroom shelf for student use and by referring to these resources themselves, teachers model appropriate use and usefulness of these resources. As well, students

may find it helpful to have available visual aids such as posters that contain word lists, spelling rules, patterns, and strategies. Teachers should involve students in creating a variety of their own resources including posters and personal dictionaries, when appropriate.

Make it clear to students when spelling counts.

There is a place for standard spelling in final drafts prepared for audiences, but it is not necessary that every word in rough drafts or personal writing be spelled in the standard way, particularly if such attention to "correct" spelling limits the writer's ideas in initial drafts. During composing, students should be encouraged to let their ideas flow freely and to use "temporary" spellings in early drafts to allow recording of ideas. This encourages students to use new and unfamiliar words. Students can proofread and correct for standard spelling during the revision stage of the writing process. The more that students write for real purposes and audiences, in and beyond the classroom, the more motivated students will be to attend to their spelling.

Inform parents/caregivers about the integrated spelling program and about their child's progress.

Because spelling is one of the most visible language skills, it is often used as a yardstick by which parents/caregivers and others judge students' language abilities. Therefore, it is important that parents/caregivers are made aware of the developmental nature of learning to spell and of how spelling instruction is being provided within the English language arts program. Through regular meetings, parent nights, and newsletters, teachers can keep parents/caregivers posted about their children's progress and make suggestions about what parents/caregivers can do to help their children become competent spellers.

Support weak spellers.

Students who are competent spellers have internalized correct spelling to the extent that they seldom have to spend any conscious effort on the actual words and can focus on the meaning that students are trying to convey. For a small percentage of students, however, the norm of the developmental process of learning to spell may not apply, and these students often must put so much effort into forming each word that they are unable to focus on whether they have communicated their ideas effectively. For those students, teachers may have to plan additional instruction and increase the intensity of that instruction.

Teachers can identify weak spellers by analyzing their error patterns and subsequently identifying particular instructional needs. The following steps

may be useful when analyzing students' spelling errors:

- Collect numerous samples of the student's spelling errors, from a variety of sources (e.g., the student's own writing, personal spelling lists, dictated tests), which will provide the diagnostic information.
- Interview the student to determine the cause of those errors (e.g., phonetic difficulties, inability to visualize, lack of knowledge about word patterns or spelling rules).
- Classify the errors, sorting them into types and frequencies.
- Select instructional strategies to remediate the student's spelling deficits (e.g., phonetic information, spelling rules or patterns).

A Sample Spelling Mini-lesson

If, when observing students' written work (see the sample of writing below), the teacher recognizes that several students need a review of the spelling rule **i** before **e** except after **c**, the teacher may prepare a mini-lesson similar to the following.

Introduce and Explain.

Never
*I couldn't beleive it. I just couldn't beleive it.
In a few short moments we (the band) would
be on the feild marching for all that we were
worth to win the Canadian feild marching
championships. We just had to . . .*

State the rule (**i** before **e** except after **c**) and explain that the rule only works in syllables with a long **e** sound. Explain that, like most rules, this one has exceptions but that remembering it will help students spell most **ie** words.

Practise, Review, and Record.

Have students work in pairs to create a list or to help the teacher create a list of familiar **ie** words from current writing or reading projects. Some words students may suggest include wiener, field, believe, grieve, achieve, shriek, pier, and piece. Discuss any suggested words that are exceptions. Have students state the rule in their own words. Record the rule and examples on chart paper and read this aloud to/with students. Post the chart paper for further reference or have students record the information in a separate language study section of their notebooks.

Apply and Reflect.

Have students work in pairs to read each other's most recent written work and to identify any **ie** words. Students should check the words to

determine if they are spelled correctly and add those that are spelled incorrectly to personal spelling lists.

Teaching about the Graphophonic and Other Cues and Conventions

Middle Level students usually have a good grasp of the grapheme-phoneme correspondences in English and can readily decode written symbolic representations. Students are not, however, always as confident in their ability to draw on this knowledge when they are spelling or when they encounter new words that students have not seen or heard. Knowledge of how syllables and stress are used in English is helpful when analyzing and building words.

Graphophonic Cues and Conventions

Good readers and writers (spellers) use the graphophonic cueing system by (1) visually recognizing known patterns of letters, (2) translating those patterns into sounds, and (3) blending the sounds together to see if they form a sensible, recognizable word (May, 1994).

Key Graphophonic Concepts

Some key graphophonic concepts are listed below:

- All syllables have a vowel sound (e.g., pen-cil).
- When a second vowel appears in a word, the final "e" usually does not add another sound (e.g., tale).
- When two consonants exist between two vowels, a division takes place between the consonants (e.g., tar-tan).
- When a consonant exists between two vowels, a division takes place between the first vowel and the consonant (e.g., o-dour).
- If a root has two syllables, the first is usually stressed (e.g., **bat**-tle).
- If a root has two syllables and the second syllable contains a long vowel, the syllable with the long vowel is stressed (e.g., pre-**cede**).
- If the first vowel in a multi-syllabic root is short and precedes two consonants, the first syllable is stressed (e.g., **lat**-i-tude); if the first vowel is a long vowel and it precedes two consonants, the syllable which contains the long vowel is stressed (e.g., al-**li**-ance).
- If the final syllable contains "le", it is not stressed (e.g., pre-am-ble) (Lapp & Flood, 1978, pp. 206-207).

Helping students understand the phonetic patterns and syllabication conventions of English helps students self-detect and self-correct miscues and chunk syllables in words.

A Sample Graphophonic Checklist

- Student understands how a word is sounded or pronounced.
- Student understands how letters and sounds work together to create the correct spelling of a word.
- Student understands on which syllable the emphasis is placed in a word.

Other Cues and Conventions

Handwriting, formatting, layout, and the visual conventions of print including the use of italics, underlining, and boldfacing also need to be modelled and taught.

Handwriting

Handwriting is important for Middle Level students. Like spelling, handwriting is a functional tool for writers. Students need to use printing and cursive writing appropriate for particular purposes (e.g., printing for labels on maps, cursive writing for reports). Students need to develop and to use legible handwriting to communicate effectively through writing and to participate in all writing activities. Handwriting should not interfere with getting ideas down on paper during drafting. Students need to develop effective manuscript and cursive handwriting skills in order to write legibly and fluently (Tompkins, 2000, p. 90). Handwriting must be legible so that others can understand what is written and fluent so that the writing is not laborious.

Middle Level teachers need to provide good models and both direct and indirect instruction to expand their students' handwriting skills and fluency. Some students still require support in letter formation, spacing, slant, uniformity, and speed.

Suggestions for Integrating Handwriting into Instruction

"The best way to help students develop fluency and legibility is to use handwriting for genuine and functional public writing activities" (Tompkins, 2000, p. 120). Suggestions for integrating handwriting into classroom instruction include:

- discussing the importance and impact of legibility for communication
- explaining the different reasons for printing and cursive writing
- explaining that handwriting is related to the ability to capture thoughts in writing
- making handwriting interesting (including topics such as calligraphy, handwriting analysis, and hieroglyphics)
- making your handwriting a good model
- discussing shape, size, and component strokes

- displaying, discussing, and setting reasonable standards for acceptable handwriting
- diagnosing the handwriting needs of each student
- using real writing for handwriting practice
- planning short, direct handwriting mini-lessons
- separating working drafts from finished drafts
- using handwriting checklists.

A Sample Handwriting Checklist

- The letters/numerals are appropriately formed and look like the letters/numerals that are supposed to be represented.
- All letters/numerals are parallel in stroke.
- The letters/numerals are slanted appropriately in the same direction.
- The letters/numerals are the appropriate size.
- There is adequate space between letters/numerals.
- The letters/numerals all sit on the baseline.

Rate

By Grade 7, most students should be able to legibly write 74 words within two minutes (Flood & Salus, 1984).

Computers

The computer is a tool. Simply using a computer and word processing program will not change the way students write. Middle Level students will often compose the same way on the computer that they compose with pen and paper. Students who normally write one-draft papers or limit revisions to making minor changes are likely to continue doing so. Effective teaching of the writing process and a range of tools, including the pen and paper, are required for students to learn to write well (Cochran-Smith, 1991).

Sample Language Ledger

Name: _____

Date: _____

Language Conventions and Cueing Systems	Strengths	Elements That Need Attention
Pragmatic Does student consider the appropriateness of language to the social situation, audience, and purpose? Does student recognize and use the appropriate register and tone? Does student recognize and use appropriate non-verbal cues including gestures, pitch, stress, and intonation?		
Textual Does student recognize and use a variety of oral, written, and other text types and formats appropriate for intended purpose? Does student recognize what makes a particular text unique? Does student recognize and use the organizational structures within a text (e.g., sequence, cause and effect, problem-solution)? Does student recognize and use "signal words" (e.g., first, as follows, consequently) within a text?		
Syntactic Does student recognize and use correctly structured sentences? Does student recognize when a sentence is not structured correctly (e.g., fragments, run-ons) or when words are not used correctly within a sentence (e.g., unclear antecedents, verb tense shifts)? Does student recognize and use correct punctuation including periods, commas, and semicolons in a sentence? Does student recognize and use a variety of sentence structures? Does student use a variety of sentence lengths (i.e., number of words)?		
Semantic/Lexical Does student use words appropriately and correctly? Does student recognize the associated meanings of words by their context? Does student recognize and comprehend the different forms of words (e.g., contractions, root words, compound words)? Does student have word attack strategies? Does student correctly spell the words used and needed in writing?		
Graphophonic Does student recognize the sound-symbol relationships (i.e., do letters match sounds)? Does student know how to pronounce, blend, decipher, and spell words using associated sound-symbol relationships?		
Other Does student print and write legibly, and at a comfortable and appropriate rate? Does student use appropriate font, formatting, layout, and visual conventions (e.g., underlining, boldface, graphic organizers, graphics)?		

Sample Language Profile

Class: _____

Date: _____

<p>Viewing: What do students know about viewing? What strategies do students use as viewers? How effectively do students in this class view?</p> <p>What are my teaching priorities for this class?</p>	<p>Representing: What do students know about representing? What strategies do students use to represent ideas? How effectively do students in this class represent their ideas?</p> <p>What are my teaching priorities for this class?</p>
<p>Listening: What do students know about listening? What strategies do students use as listeners? How effectively do students in this class listen?</p> <p>What are my teaching priorities for this class?</p>	<p>Speaking: What do students know about speaking? What strategies do students use as speakers? How effectively do students in this class speak?</p> <p>What are my teaching priorities for this class?</p>
<p>Reading: What do students know about reading? What strategies do students use as readers? How effectively do students in this class read?</p> <p>What are my teaching priorities for this class?</p>	<p>Writing: What do students know about writing? What strategies do students use as writers? How effectively do students in this class write?</p> <p>What are my teaching priorities for this class?</p>

Checklist/Anecdotal Notes: The Mechanics of Language

Student: _____			
Conceptual, and Procedural Knowledge	Date: _____	Date: _____	Date: _____
	Comments	Comments	Comments
Paragraph Indentations			
Internal Punctuation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comma • semicolon • colon • dash • hyphen • ellipses • parentheses and brackets 			
End Punctuation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • period • exclamation mark • question mark 			
Capitalization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sentence beginnings • proper nouns and adjectives • pronoun "I" • first word of direct quotations 			

Key: **CU** **Competent Use (of the concept/skill)**
 DCU **Developing Competent Use**
 NE **No Evidence of Use**

Teachers may wish to add to or delete from the items in the above checklist. Teachers may also wish to comment on a student's ability to state the name and purpose of each of the checklist items, as well as to use each appropriately. In addition, it may be useful to keep a record of the instruction provided to each student and in what context it occurred.

(adapted from Blachowicz & Fisher, 2001)

Vocabulary Alert

[illegible]

Sample Vocabulary Log

Student: _____

Date	Source	Word	Definition and/or sentence using the word

A Sample Definition Map	
<p>Word:</p> <p>Where you found it (write the sentence where you found the word):</p> 	<p>Visual Representation:</p>
<p>Definition:</p> <p>Origin:</p> 	<p>Personal Associations or Word Characteristics:</p>
<p>Who would say it? Pick three people who might say this word and write a sentence showing how they might use it.</p> 	<p>Words that are related or similar:</p>

A Sample Word Family Tree

(adapted from Buehl, 2001)











The diagram features a central grey tree shape. Six rectangular boxes are positioned around it, each containing a prompt for student input:

- Word:** (at the top)
- A sentence where you found this word:** (on the left side)
- Pronunciation Key:** (on the right side)
- Root Word:**
Which means: (on the bottom left)
- Words that are relatives:** (in the bottom center)
- Words that are similar:** (on the bottom right)

Who would use this word? Pick three kinds of people who might say this word, and write a sentence showing how they might use it.

Person One:	
Person Two:	
Person Three:	

Developmental Spelling Stages

Stages	Instructional Strategies	Grade Levels
Stage I: Pre-Phonetic Spellers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use random strings of letter-like forms and scribbles to represent message • use a few letters repeatedly • mix upper and lower case letters but show preference for upper case • write randomly on page • produce text not readable by others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read aloud and often • display words in students' environment and label objects/pictures • create big books and picture dictionaries • use dictations and experience charts • have students chant and choral read familiar stories and dictations • have students categorize words by common patterns 	Kindergarten <div>   </div>
Stage II: Phonetic Spellers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are aware of sound-symbol relationships • represent all essential sound features of a word • use blends, consonant digraphs, and long vowel patterns • have some sight words • leave spaces between words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have students develop word families for basic vowel sounds in familiar words • discuss and have students practise identifying the spelling patterns and sounds heard in words • have students identify familiar words with one and two syllables • use the cloze procedure with familiar words • use word bags or banks 	Elementary Level (Grades 1-5) <div>   </div>
Stage III: Transitional Spellers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use basic word conventions and letter sequences • begin to use morphological and visual strategies in addition to phonetic information • demonstrate greater understanding of vowel digraphs, long vowel patterns, diphthongs, and inflectional endings • often include all necessary letters in a word, but reverse some • use alternate spellings for the same sound in different words, but do not fully understand the conventions that dictate these differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review common consonant and vowel patterns • have students sort familiar past-tense words by the ending sound • focus on the connection between vowel spelling and spelling changes when adding <i>ing</i> or <i>ed</i> • have students do simple word expansion activities • encourage and provide opportunities for regular writing • have students proofread their own and others' writing • have students identify their own problem words • have students look for spelling patterns in two-, three-, and four-syllable words 	Middle Level (Grades 6 – 9) <div>   </div>
Stage IV: Conventional Spellers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extend knowledge of word structures such as affixes, base words, contractions, compound words, and homonyms • demonstrate greater accuracy in using silent consonants and in doubling consonants before adding suffixes • recognize when a word does not "look right" and try alternative spellings • learn irregular spelling patterns • spell most words correctly and quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have students develop personal spelling lists of own problem words • create meaning maps with words that have derivations • explore common Latin and Greek derivational forms • have students combine forms to make nouns or adjectives • have students use a variety of language resources • have students write regularly and proofread their own and others' writing for spelling 	Secondary Level (Grades 10 – 12) <div>   </div>
Continued Development: Mature Spellers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate a greater command of an expanding vocabulary • often return to a phonetic approach if other strategies fail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide formal and informal mini-lessons to individuals and groups as needed to review and refine spelling knowledge and strategies • have students proofread their own and others' writing for accurate written communication. 	<div>   </div>

Spelling Error Analysis

[illegible]

Sample Teacher Checklist to Support Language Study

1. Do I acknowledge and recognize the developmental nature of language?
 - recognize that Middle Level students are refining and extending their language understanding and use
 - recognize that language development is continuous and developmental
 - reflect upon and build on what students know and can do with language
 - show students that I believe in their potential as language learners
 - create an environment that develops a community of language users and learners
2. Do I model appropriate and standard language in my classroom?
 - use and model “standard” English on a regular basis
 - recognize, respect, and build upon the language that students bring to the classroom
 - acknowledge that the community, region, and social groups to which students belong will affect their language
 - teach students the power of dialects and the dialects of power
3. Do I identify and teach the important language understandings that my students need to know?
 - develop students’ explicit knowledge of the pragmatic cues and conventions, and the critical role they play in effective communication
 - develop students’ explicit knowledge of the textual cues and conventions
 - develop students’ explicit knowledge of the syntactic cues and conventions of English
 - develop students’ explicit knowledge of the semantic and lexical cues and conventions of English
 - develop students’ explicit knowledge of the graphophonic cues and conventions of English
 - develop students’ explicit knowledge of the other cues and conventions including handwriting, layout, using bold font, underlining, and italicizing
4. Do I prepare individual and group language profiles supplemented with observation, checklists, anecdotal notes, and analytic memorandums of students’ viewing, listening, reading, representing, speaking, and writing behaviours to focus my language instruction?
 - identify students’ strengths
 - identify students’ needs
 - set priorities for whole class, small group, and individual instruction
 - integrate language study into units, lessons, and mini-lessons on a regular basis
5. Do I provide students with meaningful explanations of language concepts and the appropriate language to talk about these concepts?
 - engage students in meaningful discussions about language and language issues on a regular basis
 - teach a minimum number of understandings and terms for maximum benefit
 - help students understand how an aspect of language works before giving a term or label to it
 - use explicit and inductive instruction when appropriate
6. Do I use strategic mini-lessons about aspects and features of language to help students acquire, review, and apply a specific language concept?
 - recognize that language is learned in meaningful contexts
 - use a whole, to part, to whole approach when teaching about language
 - introduce the concept and explain the concept clearly and succinctly
 - give students opportunity to practise using language to understand the concept
 - record and post in a prominent location information or understanding as a reminder
 - have students apply new understanding and reinforce it on a regular basis
7. Do I help students create individual checklists for their language needs?
 - model how to use a language checklist
 - encourage students to add own individual language issues to a group checklist
 - help students set priorities for own language learning
 - recognize that in the course of learning, students will often make mistakes and overgeneralize understanding